

Recognizing Point of View

The First Americans

The *Book of the Hopi*, compiled by Frank Waters from the accounts of thirty-two Hopi elders, expresses the Hopis' historical and religious world view. The book includes Hopi legends of migration over the North American continent until the clans reached their pre-determined homeland in what is now Oraibi, Arizona. The following is an excerpt from the migration story.

From The Book of the Hopi

And now before Māsaw turned his face from them and became invisible, he explained that every clan must make four directional migrations before they all arrived at their common, permanent home. They must go to the ends of the land—west, south, east, and north—to the farthest páso (where the land meets the sea) in each direction. Only when the clans had completed these four movements, rounds, or steps of their migration could they come together again, forming the pattern of the Creator's universal plan.

That is the way it was. Some clans started to the south, others to the north, retraced their routes to turn east and west, and then back again. All their routes formed a great cross whose center, Tüwanasavi [Center of the Universe], lay in what is now the Hopi country in the southwestern part of the United States. . . .

Some clans forgot in time the commands of Māsaw, settling in tropical climates where life was easy, and developing beautiful cities of stone that were to decay and crumble into ruin. Other clans did not complete all four of their migrations before settling in their permanent home, and hence lost their religious power and standing. Still others persisted. . . . These were the ones who finally realized the purpose and the meaning of their four migrations.

For these migrations were themselves purification ceremonies, weeding out through generations all the latent evil. . . . Man could not succumb to the comfort and luxury given him by indulgent surroundings, for then he lost the need to rely upon the Creator. Nor should he be frightened even by the polar extremities of the earth, for there he learned that the power given him by the Creator would still sustain him. So, by traveling to all the farthest extremities of the land during their four migrations, these chosen people finally came to settle on the vast arid plateau that stretches between the Colorado and Rio Grande rivers.

Many other people today wonder why these people chose an area devoid of running water to irrigate their sparse crops. The Hopi know that they were led here so that they would have to depend upon the scanty rainfall which they must evoke with their power and prayer, and so preserve always that knowledge and faith in the supremacy of their Creator who had brought them to this Fourth World after they had failed in three previous worlds.

This, they say, is their supreme title to this land, which no secular power can refute.

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1. According to the selection, what was the purpose of the Hopi migrations?
2. For what reasons did certain clans not complete the migrations? What were the consequences?
3. Why do the Hopi believe they were led to their present settlement as the location for their permanent home?
4. **Analysis.** What role does religion seem to play in the Hopi view of history?
5. **Analysis.** How does the Hopi view of creation and migration differ from the Bering Strait land bridge theory?
6. **Synthesis.** In the final sentence, the author points to the Hopi view of their rights to the land of their permanent home in Arizona. To whom do you think the author is referring when he mentions a "secular [not sacred or religious] power"?